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ABSTRACT

With the goal of improving citizenship and character education in the elementary school child through learning by doing in the form of a school-based club, the Young Citizens League (YCL) appeared in rural South Dakota early in the twentieth century, introduced by Michael M. Guhin and developed by E.C. Giffen. By 1930, at its peak, it had an estimated 75,000 members in 4,000 chapters. Following its motto "Help Uncle Sam" and through its standing committees for Information and Programs, Health and Sanitation, Physical Training, and Patriotic Aid, the YCL focused on patriotism, personal health, and doing things each day to help the country. Beginning in 1926-27, state-wide projects were recommended to local chapters and included endeavors such as beautifying school grounds; recataloging, reconditioning, and building up school libraries; music appreciation and the purchase of musical instruments; art appreciation and placing good pictures in classrooms. Beginning in 1926-27, the YCL became an official state program, supported by budget appropriations. However, most project money was raised through club efforts such as traditional box socials. Annual student speech and essay contests offered trips to county and state conventions for winners. Although officially prohibited, YCL members were often enlisted by teachers for janitorial work. (NEC)

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THE YOUNG CITIZENS LEAGUE: ITS ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH DAKOTA TO 1930

A Paper Presented at the

Thirteenth Annual

DAKOTA HISTORY CONFERENCE

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Dakota State College
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by

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The Young Citizens League was, and in North Dakota still is, a school-based club for children that had in the two Dakotas official support and direction from the state educational departments after the late 1920s.[1] It was designed for the one-room rural school or common school, although Young Citizens Leagues, or YCLs, have been organized in town elementary schools. The educational goal of the Young Citizens League was to improve citizenship education and character education of the elementary school child through learning by doing in the form of a club or league. Its emphases and methods varied over the years, but the system of concluding the year's activities in county and state conventions, when combined with support and direction from the state education departments and the county superintendents, kept YCLs going in most rural school of the Dakotas until consolidation closed most of the one-room schools. As a result, the majority of adult South Dakotans and North Dakotans today probably were members of a YCL club in the one-room common schools which they attended as children. Thus, the Young Citizens League constitutes an aspect of the history of education in these two states that is worthy of examination. This paper, however, is limited to the origin and development of the Young Citizens League in South Dakota until 1930.

Although the Young Citizens League acquired state organization and its greatest momentum in the latter half of the 1920s, it originated in the Progressive Era. Its purposes and methods were rather typical of its period of origin. The first two decades of the twentieth century are known in our history as a period when reformers included among their targets big business, corrupt and inefficient government, the unAmericanized immigrant masses, and the backward, inefficient farmers. The reformers were typically middle-class, educated, native-

American Protestants who were based in the urbanizing East, although educated persons anywhere might become leaders in one reform movement or another. Progressivism was the liberalism of its day, although, in addition to concern about the economic well-being of all classes that is the hallmark of later liberalism, it was concerned with spreading values which the reformers believed were socially valuable as well as individually uplifting.

The reformers' ideal was a morally-upright, socially-conscious citizen who participates in democratic government, who is a patriot, and who has good hygiene practices, work habits, and the education to adopt more efficient methods of economic production utilizing the findings of science. Thrift and conservation of natural resources were still other values of the Progressive-Era reformers. These concerns about character formation meant that many reformers of the time turned their attentions to the children of the nation. Much effort went into getting these concerns reflected in the curriculum of the schools.

Pedagogy itself was in the throes of change. The Progressive Education ideas of John Dewey, which often are summarized as "learning by doing," were being urged upon teachers. The concept could be joined with the goal-oriented voluntary association, which was a principal method of reformers in the United States long before the Progressive Era, to establish organizations for children in which they would develop certain desired values and skills through learning by doing. Thus, the Progressive Era produced the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs (later called 4H Clubs), each reflecting certain Progressive-Era values.

These organizations were not school-based, although the cooperation of the school often was sought. Schools also were the sites of organizations for students

with various character education goals. Some were invented as a method of teaching participative democratic citizenship through some measure of pupil self-government. The School City, originated by Wilson, L. Gill, was utilized for periods in several northeastern urban areas during the early years of this century. In its most successful form each classroom from the upper elementary level through high school was organized as a "school city" for pupil self-governance. It was claimed by proponents to improve morale, discipline, and attendance. By 1911 a national organization to promote the idea, the School City League, was formed as a branch of the Patriotic League, whose council included such men as Lymen Beecher Stowe, Admiral George Dewey, Gifford Pinchot, and Josiah Strong.[2]

In 1897, the same year as the first School City experiment, the General Federation of Women's Clubs of Philadelphia began Children's Leagues of Good Citizenship in schools in Philadelphia to take their concerns for civic improvement to the elementary school children. These clubs were organized on a school and even classroom basis, with monthly meetings conducted by elected student officers. A member of the women's clubs, rather than the teacher, provided the guidance.[3] Another effort at the elementary school level in Indianapolis was described as utilizing pupil participation in school management with involvement "in the care of school property; in protecting the rights of younger children; in maintaining the sanitary condition of the building and grounds; in the making of repairs and equipment."[4]

These school-based organizations which were designed to improve citizenship and character education in Eastern urban settings appear not to have survived the Progressive Era in recognizable form. The Young Citizens League,

which clearly shared much in philosophy and goals and even somewhat in style of organization with them, arose late in the same period in the one-room schools of the most rural area of the nation just as that region was truly emerging from the pioneer stage. Only the Young Citizens League had a lengthy life, and the purpose of this paper is to trace the early history of the only successful school-based children's club organization to emerge out of the ideals of Progressive-Era reformers.

Publications that have originated from the Young Citizens League or from persons in contact with it have stated that Michael M. Guhin started YCLs in 1912 in Brown County during his tenure as county superintendent. This origin was first recorded in print in 1927 in an article about YCL in the National Education Association Journal.[5] The fullest attempt by YCL leaders to describe the beginnings of the Young Citizens League, entitled "A Brief History of the Y. C. L.," from internal evidence appeared in late 1929 or shortly thereafter.[6] Most other accounts seem to depend directly or indirectly upon it or upon contacts with Guhin.

According to YCL tradition, repeated in various publications over the years, Guhin got the idea for YCL from a Minnesota Department of Public Instruction bulletin with the title "The Little Citizens League," which was prepared by Anna Stelland Williams. Guhin decided to encourage a few of the best teachers to try the concept, but he suggested a name change to Young Citizens League because the word "little" would not appeal to the boys and girls in the upper grades, who often were 15 and 16 years old. Guhin at the time did not record his activities because he did not anticipate the future development of YCL. His memory suggested that Garden Prairie No. 26-4 School of Brown County, which was

then taught by Miss Ethel Cocking, had the first YCL. "A Brief History of the Y. C. L." itself records that Cocking was dubious about that claim. Other early YCLs were said to be in the Brown County schools taught by D. C. Mills (Podoll School, Shelby Township), E. C. Giffen (Verdon School, Garden Prairie Township), Herbert Melcher (a school in Highland Township), and Mrs. Myrtle Lathrop (a school in Gem Township). Early success led to about 40 YCLs in Brown County rural schools by 1915 when Guhin's county superintendency ended. A University of South Dakota master's thesis written in 1936 contains the only account of the origins of YCL that was not produced by someone closely imvolved with YCL. It, unfortunately, relies almost entirely upon M. M. Guhin's memory for the early history and repeats the substance of this account but with the date of Miss Cocking's first YCL moved back to 1910 and the growth to 40 YCLs occurring by 1912.[7]

"A Brief History of the Y. C. L." says that the work languished after 1915 until a revival under the Brown County superintendency in the early 1920s of Miss Lucille Trott, who had been deputy county superintendent under Guhin. Most other accounts ignore the period between Guhin's starting the YCL and the 1920s.

In any attempt to trace the development of the Young Citizens League, "The Little Citizens League" bulletin from Minnesota by Anna S. Williams, as the name is given in most accounts, becomes important. There is no existing record, however, short of some unseen file in a Minnesota archives or a passing reference in the biennial reports of the Minnesota Department of Public Instruction, of such a bulletin in the 1910 to 1912 period or even later until 1918. In that year the Minnesota Department of Education published a book-length bulletin entitled School Patriotism: Hand Book for Teachers' Patriotic League and Little

Citizens League. That an Annie E. Shelland is the principal author is apparent only in her signing "A Letter to the Children," which prefaces the Little Citizens League section.[8] Shelland married in 1920 and thereafter was Annie Shelland Williams.[9]

The instructions for organizing and running a Little Citizens League are extensive in this 1918 bulletin. There is a pledge which focuses upon patriotism, personal health, and doing things each day to help the country. There is a model constitution that provides for membership by election, the election of a slate of four officers with the teacher as ex officio advisor, and a list of the duties of each officer. A set of by-laws gives the league motto as "Help Uncle Sam," and order of business for meetings that includes a flag salute, and a list of four standing committees. The Committee on Information and Programs is to gather the information needed for health and patriotic work and to provide a monthly combined health and patriotic program. The Committee on Health and Sanitation is to assist the teacher in caring for the heating and ventilation of the schoolroom and its general sanitary condition and is also to conduct a daily hygiene-habits inspection of the pupils. The Committee on Physical Training is to be responsible for active organized play and recreation during every intermission. The Committtee on Patriotic Aid is to plan active assistance for "Uncle Sam" through production work such as gardens, or Red Cross. The committee members are appointed by the president for one-half school year while the elected officers serve the entire year. A "Manual for League Officers" gives instruction in conducting a formal business meeting. Extensive suggestions are given for the work of each of the four committees.[10]

Several of the special concerns of the Progressive-Era reformers are embodied

in the Little Citizens League as set forth in this volume. Instruction in personal hygiene, learning civics by doing, character education, and, heightened perhaps by the wartime atmosphere, patriotism are prominent aspects of the purposes of the Little Citizens League. Shelland, a rural teacher in northern Minnesota in the early years of the century, was a county superintendent from 1906 to 1915 when she became a rural school inspector in the Minnesota state departemt of education. She must have been aware of the experiements in character and citizenship education in eastern cities from the national magazines. She specifically was active at the national level in the General Federation of Women's Clubs and may have known about the Philadelphia efforts through contacts in this organization. She was chairman of education for the Minnesota Committee of Safety during World War I, when her bulletin was published.[11] It is only natural, then, that patriotism is given so much emphasis in her description of the Little Citizens League.

Most of the evidence about the Young Citizens League's development in South Dakota over the following four or five years is fully consistent with Stelland's or Williams' 1918 bulletin being the phantom "Little Citizens League" bulletin. "A Brief History of the Y. C. L." claims Williams was a speaker on YCL at a state educational conference in 1919, but her name does not appear in the Proceedings of the South Dakota Education Association any year near 1919. She did do "institute work" in North and South Dakota in 1920;[12] very likely she spoke at several of the multi-county summer teachers institutes that were based on college campuses in that period.

A Little Citizens League was started in Brookside School in Aberdeen Township of Brown County in September 1920.[13] It surely was not the first one or

the only one, particularly in Brown County, as the YCL tradition of strong early development in Brown County seems to be accurate.

Guhin's own references to YCL in the early 1920s are consistent with the 1918 bulletin as the point of departure. He had taught at the Northern Normal and Industrial School, as Northern State College in Aberdeen was then called, after his county superintendency until 1918, when he went to Paris in the Knights of Columbus' war effort. Guhin returned in March of 1919 and took a course in Americanization work at the University of Minnesota. In July of 1919 he assumed the new position of State Director of Americanization under South Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction Fred L. Shaw to administer the state-aided night schools for Americanization, which were authorized by a 1919 state law.[14] His first report in the Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for 1920 shows his concern for civic and patriotic instruction of the elementary school children in the rural schools, where many pupils did not complete the seventh and eighth grades in which American history and government were taught. He reported that the Americanization Department was about to publish an 160-page bulletin on patriotic and civic instruction for pupils in the lower grades.[15] Two years later, after he was placed in charge of rural school supervision as well as Americanization, Guhin reported that nearly all the 10,000 copies of the bulletin had been distributed.[16]

The bulletin, entitled Patriotic and Civic Instruction, issued from the press in January 1921, and it contains the earliest known reference to the Young Citizens League:

Young Citizens' League

> Minnesota has an organization called "The Little Citizens' League." Suggestions for the organization of such a club will be sent on request. Some of the lines of endeavor of this organization are given here with the thought that, even without the formal organization, this work can be consciously carried on--indeed must be carried on if civics is to mean better citizenship. (We believe "Young" is more acceptable to boys of 12 to 16 years than "Little.")[17]

After being placed in charge of rural education in addition to Americanization in July 1921, Guhin had a free hand to promote the Young Citizens League throughout the state's rural schools.[18] He was placed in charge of the 1922 revision of the course of study for the rural schools and was specifically the principal author of the civics section. In it, organization of a "Little Citizens League or Young Citizens League" is urged as significant to the civics program. The details of organizing are not given, but reference is made to "Johnson and Ransom's Community Civics" for more complete information.[19] The authors, each of whom in the past had authored widely-used history and civics textbooks for the grammar schools in South Dakota, obviously produced this textbook to fit the civics course in the new course of study, and they must have been in consultation with Guhin.

Chapter V of Community Civics is about "The Young Citizens' League," and its opening sentence states that the children of many schools "have organized 'Young Citizens Leagues,' or 'Little Citizens Leagues.'" Young Citizens League is then used consistently throughout the chapter, which repeats the pledge for the Little Citizens League as found in Shelland's Minnesota School Patriotism bulletin and, with very minor modifications, the constitution and by-laws for the Little Citizens League, including the motto "Help Uncle Sam" and the consti-

tution's provision for membership by election. The same committees are presented: Information and Programs, Health and Sanitation, Physical Training, Patriotic Aid. Suggested activities are not covered in the same detail as in the Stelland bulletin, but they are similar with allowance for the peacetime conditions prevailing in 1922.[20] "A Brief History of the Y. C. L." erroneously credits Johnson's earlier textbook, South Dakota: A Republic of Friends, with this chapter which its says "helped materially in making the League known throughout the state."

Guhin retained his position in the Department of Public Instruction until January 1925. He never mentions YCL in the three reports which he made in the Biennial Reports of the Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1920 to 1924. After 1922 he issued a magazine called The Rural School Bulletin from the Department of Public Instruction with an intended audience of the upper grade school children and their teachers. Early issues are inexistent in libraries, so how much YCL was promoted in this magazine is unknown. YCL's own publications do not mention it in their historical accounts.

Guhin presided at the meeting of the Department of County Superintendents on November 27, 1923, at the South Dakota Education Association convention. At this meeting Brown County Superintendent Delo Townshend discussed the Little Citizens League, which he implied was universal in Brown County rural schools, and repeated the preference for "Young" over "Little" in the name. The report of this meeting in the January 1924 South Dakota Educator is the first known mention of YCL in a periodical.[21]

From this date on fairly adequate information is available on the development of YCL in South Dakota. The evidence from the early 1920s points to Annie E. Stelland's 1918 School Patriotism volume as the origin of the concept

and the organizational structure. Yet just a few years later, YCL sources, including Guhin, say he picked up the idea from a bulletin by the same individual and applied it in the Brown County schools while he was county superintendent there around 1912. Many of the first teachers which are said in YCL literature to have used it were closely connected with YCL around 1930 when the supposed origins were set on paper, and none then or later ever contradicted the story in print. The 1912 origin thus has too much support to be easily dismissed. Strengthening the case for the 1912 origin would be proof that the individuals named were indeed teaching in rural Brown County while Guhin was county superintendent. The evidence is ambiguous; only a portion of these teachers are found in the records as late as 1915 when Guhin left that position.[22]

Written or printed evidence prior to 1918 of YCL or discovery of the phantom "Little Citizens League" bulletin would settle the issue. Many minor state publications, however, have escaped listing in the major bibliographies compiled by librarians, and it is not unknown for such state publications to have failed to be collected in even the official libraries of the respective states.

While Stelland's Little Citizens League of 1918 has much war-induced emphasis upon patriotic activites, it is also very elaborately developed for a new idea. In one place in the publication a reference is made to a question "many teachers have asked" about the "relation of 'The Little Citizens' League' to 'Club Work.'" The implication of the explanation is that the Little Citizens League had previously been publicized in Minnesota, perhaps only for a matter of months and perhaps only in teacher institutes. Her lenghty educational career, however, permits the possibility that Stelland originated and refined it, without the degree of patriotic fervor present in the 1918 publication,

many years earlier. Whether she published it by 1912 in any form or not, she possibly could have communicated the idea by direct personal contact with Guhin. She attended grade school in Aberdeen in the 1880s and graduated from the state normal school in Madison (now Dakota State College) in 1895 before going to Minnesota to teach. By 1906 she was a county superintendent in a frontier county in northern Minnesota.[23] It seems perfectly natural for her to have visited family or friends in Aberdeen from time to time and to have sought acquaintance with her Brown County counterpart, Guhin. This scenario is strictly conjecture, however, and it does not account for Guhin's insistence upon the bulletin.

On the other hand, a case can be made for Guhin having a faulty memory, and many of the details indeed are not consistently stated in the various YCL accounts of the 1912 beginning. His associates then must have failed to contradict him for reasons of their own. The alternative hypothesis is that Guhin was introduced to Stelland's School Patriotism in his Americanization course at the University of Minnesota in 1919. Returning to South Dakota to take the Americanization position in the Department of Public Instruction, he might have introduced the publication and the Little Citizens League concept to teachers in Brown County who were old acquaintances and to Lucille Trott, the current Brown County superintendent, who formerly had been his deputy superintendent. There is no direct evidence for this scenario either, and the puzzle of the origin of the Young Citizens League cannot be settled until additional evidence comes to light.

Regardless of the date of its origin, by 1924 YCL was gathering momentum that shortly would make it a state-supported organization with clubs in most of the rural schools of South Dakota. Guhin in 1924 conducted a survey of the rural

schools in which he asked among other things about Young Citizens Leagues in the schools. The survey showed that there were YCLs in over one-half of the counties and that a total of 843 leagues were then in existence. That fall E. C. Giffen, a Brown County teacher who reputedly was one of the first to start a YCL, was hired as a rural supervisor in the Department of Public Instruction. During the 1924-25 school year Giffen organized 243 YCL chapters as he went about the state inspecting standard rural schools for state aid.[24]

At the annual summer meeting of the county superintendents in Pierre in July 1925, Giffen received unanimous approval for his plan to make the Young Citizens League a state organization. The constitution and by-laws were modified to provide for the county and state organization. The county superintendents were now to act as county chairmen of YCL, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction was made ex officio the State Chairman of the Young Citizens League. The county superintendents elected Giffen as Executive Secretary of the state organization.[25] In addition, they voted to make YCL a mandatory condition for state aid to a rural school, and the Department of Public Instruction quickly incorporated a value of 40 points for an operational YCL club into its rating scale for qualifying rural schools for state aid.[26]

The revised constitution and by-laws shortened the terms of YCL club officers to one month, and an officer could be reelected to the same position only once in the same school term in order to spread around the experience of being an officer. The number of committees increased to six with the addition of an Executive Committee, a Committee on Cleanliness and Order, and a Courtesy Committee, while the program committee was dropped.[27] Committee members were to serve one week, except the members of the Courtesy Committee who were to

serve for a month.[28] The pledge was changed to eliminate a reference to personal hygiene, and the motto was expanded to "Help Uncle Sam, one another, our school and our community." Prospective members still had to receive a majority vote of current members to be admitted.[29]

In all, then, this version of the constitution and by-laws deemphasized the personal health and hygiene aspect and transformed the stress on national patriotism to good citizenship within the school setting. Throughout the rest of the 1920s a major concern of YCL was the local club's efforts to improve its school both in facilities and in activities that eased the teacher's tasks, especially those of a housekeeping nature. The frequent switching of officers and especially committee assignments was intended to keep the level of interest high. Pins and chapter charters were also provided by the state organization to arouse pride in YCL.[30]

With sanction and active promotion by the county superintendents and open support by the Department of Public Instruction, YCL now expended rapidly. By January 1926 Giffen reported that thirteen counties had a YCL in every rural school.[31] By the close of the school year, 1662 YCL chapters had received charters, and there were 27,983 members.[32] That spring Brown and Potter Counties held the first YCL conventions.[33] These conventions, which were held in most counties the next spring, provided a climax to the year's activities for the members and also provided added incentive to become adept at parliamentary procedure, which was a real emphasis of YCL that year and for many years to come.[34] By the spring of 1927 there were 3415 chartered YCL chapters.[35]

On April 25 and 26, 1927, the first state convention assembled in the house chambers of the state capitol. There were three delegates from each of

of the 45 counties represented, the delegates having been selected by the county conventions. It was a great success. Governor William J. Bulow and other state officials addressed the convention in addition to Guhin and Giffen. The YCL delegate children conducted effective business meetings. The convention voted Guhin the honorary office of President Emeritus of the Young Citizens League and adopted a code of ethics that would be distributed for posting in the schools with YCL chapters for as long as it continued. Observers were highly impressed, particularly Governor Bulow.[36]

Two months later the Young Citizens League became an official state program supported by an appropriation in the state budget. This adoption of YCL by the state assured its longterm continuance, which the initial enthusiasm and success did not make conclusive. The fashion in which YCL obtained its first state appropriation, however, was not fully a happy event.

In the 1920s agriculture fell into depression from overproduction and the resulting low prices. This condition contributed to a series of unbalanced biennial budgets in South Dakota, accompanied by a growing reluctance to raise taxes. The state-aid program for rural schools provided funding only to schools that met state standards. Its requirements cost local money to receive state money, and the growing resentment tended to focus upon the state-aid program. The regular session of the legislature in 1927 barely retained the state-aid program while cutting funding for staffing its administration. Giffen's job was threatened.[37] The new Democratic Governor Bulow vetoed the general appropriations bill because the budget was not balanced. A special session of the legislature was called for late June, and it became the scene of bitter battling between the Republican majority and the Democratic governor.

Before the special session Representative George B. Otte of Clark County made an offer to Giffen to sponsor an amendment to the general appropriations bill to fund the YCL.[38] It would have the effect of providing the assurance of a paid job for Giffen. The governor the same day informed Giffen that he planned to recommend an appropriation for the League to the special session, which he did in his address on June 22 to a joint session.[39] Bulow did not suggest cuts or tax increases until the legislature forced him to make recommendations. On June 27 he wrote to the legislature that his recommendation was to end the $160,000 per annum of state aid to standard rural schools. His next sentence was: "I believe an appropriation of $10,000.00 [for the biennium] to perpetuate the organization of the Young Citizens League, would be of far more benefit to the boys and girls of this state, than this state aid to rural schools."[40] The governor's recommendation was enacted along with the deletion of the rural school supervisor positions in the Department of Public Instruction.[41] However unfortunate the circumstances of the passage of state support for YCL, it was thought by some to be the first instance of any state government appropriating money specifically for character education.[42] Giffen began drawing his salary and travel expenses from the YCL appropriation as full time Executive Secretary of the League on July 1, 1927.[43]

In March of 1927 Giffen announced a contest for a YCL song with $50 prizes to be awarded to to the writer of the lyrics and the composer of the music.[44] A committee made its selections by the fall of 1927, choosing "The Young Citizens League March Song" by Joseph Mills Hansen which was set to music by Richard E. Broughton. It was first sung at the state convention in 1928.[45]

YOUNG CITIZENS LEAGUE MARCH SONG

O up from every valley
And down from every crest,
We come, thy loyal children,
By all thy favors blest,
To pledge our firm allegiance,
America, to thee--
Thy guardians of tomorrow,
By mountain, plain, and sea.

CHORUS

We march and we sing; our voices ring;
Young Citizens are we;
Leagued in a host whose watchwords are
Youth, Courage, Loyalty.
Hailing our nation's banner,
Afloat in the sunlit sky,
Which through hopes and fears, through future years,
We will hold evermore on high.

In all the winds of Heaven
There breathes a patriot's creed--
Clean hearts and minds and bodies
Serve best our country's need--
That creed we hold, America,
Enshrined in heart and soul;
A deeper sense of duty
And better lives our goal.[46]

This song was to become a part of the heritage of the rural-school pupils of South Dakota for the next forty years.

The local YCL clubs were kept busy with various projects in addition to the daily and weekly work of committees involving all the members in the schoolhouse or on the grounds. Beginning with the 1926-27 school year there was a statewide major project recommended to the local YCL chapters. The 1927 state convention and all those thereafter normally selected the major project for the next year. The major project became a minor project to be continued the next year and locally perhaps for several years. In the first few years the major

projects in spirit harked back to the production work emphasized in Stelland's School Patriotism bulletin while they stressed improving the school. The 1926-27 major project was beautifying the school grounds. The major projects of the next three years were: 1927-28, recataloging, reconditioning and building up school libraries; 1928-29, music appreciation and the purchase of musical instruments; 1929-30, art appreciation and the adding of good pictures to classrooms. Various other local projects such as erecting flagpoles also were undertaken.[47] These efforts required money. While very insignificant dues might be collected by the YCL clubs, the majority of the money for project work was raised by fundraising projects, some of which undoubtedly placed under YCL aegis the traditional school money raisers such as the box social. In 1926-27 the 60,092 members of the 3415 YCL clubs raised $83,408.37 for their projects.

The first four major projects were rather clearly ideas that Giffen and his associates had developed for YCL school improvement projects even before the state convention and state support were instituted. The condensed 1927 annual report emphasizes activities in each of the four areas with the sum of money expended for each.[48]

There was a tendency to make into YCL projects various activities that outside organizations wished to get schools to promote. Undoubtedly the YCL promoters such as Giffen hoped for a synergy effect, even if they were unfamiliar with the concept. These projects gave YCLs something to do in addition to the routine committee work and monthly meetings, and the YCL connection undoubtedly meant more enthousiasm went into the projects than otherwise would have been the case. Fire Prevention Week in October and Arbor Day tree plantings in the spring in particular were made YCL projects in the late 1920s.[49]

Another one of these projects suggested by an outside agency started an an activity that was to be a major part of YCL work for many years. The United States Department of Agriculture through the Extension Service based at South Dakota State College of Agricultural and Mechanical Arts at Brookings and an allied organization, the Rust Prevention Association, in the fall of 1927 undertook the sponsorship of a speech and essay contest on "Black Stem Rust and the Common Barberry." The contest began with competitions in the local one-room schools, advanced through district contests in each county to county contests at the county YCL conventions. The written essay forms of the speeches were then submitted to multicounty regional committees. The winners on that level were reduced to three state winners, who received free trips to the 1928 YCL state convention to present their speeches.[50]

The next year an essay contest was sponsored by the South Dakota Association of Manufacturers and Employers on "Agriculture and Industry Must Prosper Together." In the 1929-30 school year the essay topic was "Conservation of Natural Resources, including Woods, Waters, and Wild Life," and it was sponsored jointly by the South Dakota Department of Game and Fish and the Izaak Walton League.[51] In the following years the YCL usually ran its essay and speech contest without outside sponsors. Already by the second year of the essay contests a declamatory contest was started for the pupils in the lower grades, who could not compete on an equal basis with the older students in essay preparation and delivery.[52]

County superintendents by the 1920s regularly communicated with the rural teachers through a newsletter. As early as 1926 many county superintendents were including reports from the local YCL clubs in those newsletters, and

several were publishing special YCL newsletters for the YCL clubs. Progressive teachers who wanted to promote writing got the school YCL to produce a school newspaper also as early as 1926.[53] Giffen began promoting YCL newspapers, and a display of the club papers and the county YCL newsletters was arranged for the 1928 convention. Giffen reported after the convention that 37 counties were producing YCL newsletters and that over 1000 YCl chapters were editing school papers. By the 1929 convention the display was turned into a contest which was to continue as a regular feature of YCL county and state conventions in later years.[54]

Giffen as early as 1926 was publishing letters from YCL clubs in his regular Young Citizens League column in the South Dakota Education Association Journal.[55] This feature was so well thought of that League officials decided to take advantage of the jounalistic training of a Department of Public Instruction employee, Miss Aleen Erickson, to put out a monthly paper or magazine for the Young Citizens League members. Each YCL club or an individual could subscribe for a school year for 50 cents initially. The first issue of The Young Citizen appeared in September 1929. It was designed to consist mainly of the writings of YCL members.[56] By the spring of 1930 it had 4000 subscribers, and it featured solicited contributions from prominent citizens and state officials and state current events items as well as pupil contributions.[57] The Young Citizen was destined to have a publishing history spanning decades until the decline of the Young Citizens League itself.

Only one major activity of YCL had not yet reached full fruition by 1930. The major project of 1928-29 was musical appreciation and the purchase of musical instruments. Several teachers and county superintendents seized upon

the project as a means of improving music education, which had lagged in South Dakota's rural schools. More musical instruments than usual were purchased through YCL club efforts--especially phonographs. Several school orchestras (rhythm bands, etc.) were organized, and several county choruses were held for the first time in the history of the state. The Brown County chorus performed at the Brown County Young Citizens League convention and was broadcast live over WNAX of Yankton.[58] More county choruses were organized in conjunction with county YCL conventions in the following years, and in 1935 the first Young Citizens League state chorus sang at the state convention.[59] It was a regular feature thereafter at state YCL conventions.

The number of YCL chartered chapters and the membership continued to grow after the first state convention in 1927. In 1928, 4218 clubs were reported, and they counted 68,840 members. Ninety-five percent of the counties held YCL conventions that year, and 55 counties sent pupil delegates to the state YCL convention.[60] Giffen was elected Superintendent of Public Instruction in November 1928, which thus made him ex officio State Chairman of the Young Citizens League. He employed D. C. Mills, who was reputed to be one of the early Brown County rural school teachers to try YCL when M. M. Guhin was county superintendent and who more recently was Campbell County Superintendent, to be the Executive Secretary of the YCL in the Department of Public Instruction.[61] His report in the 1930 Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction uses estimated statistics, but it shows that growth had nearly stopped. He estimated 4000 chapters with 75,000 members.[62]

To its enthusiasts the Young Citizens League seemed in these years of initial success to be the greatest thing since the invention of motherhood and apple pie.

It clearly was bringing improvements for country-school pupils, whose education usually had suffered from isolation, poor buildings, lack of equipment, weak and inexperienced teachers, and a lack of motivation. But YCL was not all gold; there was dross in the recipe as well. Many an overworked teacher in a one-room school found YCL most useful as a way to engage the pupils in doing much of the janitorial work she or he would otherwise have to do. In such schools YCL was a sham which sometimes received little enthusiasm from the pupils. Giffen, very much aware of this pitfall, included this admonition in his comments in the September 1927 South Dakota Education Association Journal:

> The Young Citizens League is not a janitor organization and no member should be or can be required to come before school calls or remain after school classes to perform an assigned duty, unless the member voluntarily wishes to do so. No individual member should be or can be assigned to perform a routine duty that takes more than five minutes of his or her time during any one school day.[63]

His directive did not end the problem; variations of the warning appeared in later years. Often, because it was the most frequent activity of the committees, the janitorial work was the strongest impression remaining of YCL among certain oral history interviewees last fall.

By 1930 the Young Citizens League was firmly established in South Dakota one-room schools. It already was spreading to other states, and it had before it a long life, which continues to the present in western North Dakota. The further history of YCL must wait a future paper. Its astounding development up to 1930 must be attributed to the vision and the abilities of two men, Michael M. Guhin, the father of the Young Citizens League, and E. C. Giffen, who had the concept of knitting it together into a county and state organization and who had the organizing ability and the salesmanship to make it happen.

Notes

1. This study of the Young Citizens League is an outgrowth of my work as a librarian-researcher in the Mountain Plains Library Association's Country School Legacy grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. As a native Ohioan living and working in South Dakota only since 1974, I first encountered the name "Young Citizens League" last September in correspondence that came in response to my plea in newspapers for information about rural schoolhouses and country school education. As I entered empty one-room schools last fall I often encountered a YCL banner or a YCL charter or the YCL Code of Ethics on a wall. YCL became a particular focus of my research more recently. The original sources for reconstructing the history of the Young Citizens League, however, are largely scattered and lost or in unknown locations. Even the publications of YCL have become rare; perhaps a majority of the issues of its magazine, The Young Citizen, are lost totally.

   My study of the early years of YCL thus may have serious errors from a lack of sources; some of those errors may be quite apparent to those listeners who had involvement in YCL or to similar readers of the published proceedings. Persons in possession of YCL publications or of YCL records or local materials produced by YCL activities are urged to write me with a description or list of these materials. They are further urged to deposit the materials for future historical research in the archives of the country school that are to be established as an outcome of the Country School Legacy grant efforts in a college library in both South Dakota and North Dakota or to offer them to the manuscript collections of the respective state historical societies.

2. Wilson L. Gill, "Laboratory Method of Teaching Citizenship," American City, vol. 4, April, 1911, pp. 173-174. The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature cites numerous articles under the heading "School City in the first fifteen years of this century. It seems to have lost credibility when some teachers and schools found their students were capable of abusing self-government.

3. Mrs. George Zimmerman, "Children's Leagues of Good Citizenship," American City, vol. 7, 1912, pp. 443-446.

4. "Civic Education in Elementary Schools," School and Society, vol. 2, no. 30, July 24, 1915, pp. 128-129. This article is a summary of a U. S. Bureau of Education bulletin by Arthur W. Dunn, "Civic Education in Elementary Schools as Illustrated in Indianapolis."

5. S. B. Nissen, "The Young Citizens' League of South Dakota," vol. 16, 1927, p. 278.

6. This publication consists of three legal-length mimeographed sheets. Its author is not given, but it probably was someone associated with the YCL

operation at the time in the South Dakota Department of Public Instruction. Most likely authors are D. C. Mills, State Executive Director of YCL, or Ailene Erickson, Editor of The Young Citizen, the recently-established YCL paper.

7. Emil Pietz, "A survey of the History and the Activites of the Young Citizens' League," unpublished M.A. thesis, University of South Dakota, 1936, pp. 1-2.

8. St. Paul, Minn.: C. G. Schultz, State Department of Education, 1918, pp. 117-118.

9. Who's Who Among Minnesota Women: A History of Woman's Work in Minnesota from Pioneer Days to Date . . ., comp. by Mary Dillon Foster, [St. Paul, Minn.]: the compiler, 1924, p. 345.

10. Minnesota Department of Education, School Patriotism, pp. 119-128; about 45 pages of suggestions for the committees' work follow.

11. "Annie Shelland Williams," Who's Who Among Minnesota Women, p. 345.

12. Ibid.

13. Helen J. Bergh, letter to the writer, March 19, 1981, p. 2. Bergh was after World War II an officer of the national Young Citizens League of America. She says that this introduction of Little Citizens League into her childhood school is her earliest knowledge of YCL.

14. "M. M. Guhin." in O. W. Coursey, Who's Who in South Dakota, 5 vols., Mitchell, S. D.: Educator Supply Co., vol. 4, 1923, p. 39.

15. "Report of Americanization Directors," pp. 14-19 in Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of South Dakota, July 1, 1918--June 30, 1920, Pierre, S. D.: State Publishing Co., 1920, p. 18.

16. "Report of Director of Americanization and Rural Education," pp. 15-19 in Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of South Dakota, July 1, 1920--June 30, 1922, Pierre, S. D.: State Publishing Co., 1922, p. 17.

17. South Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Patriotic and Civic Instruction, [Pierre, S. D.: Hipple Printing Co.], 1921, p. 113.

18. Comments of Fred L. Shaw in "In Memoriam" issue of The Rural Educator, vol. 20, no. 4, January-February, 1941, p. 8. The Rural Educator was Guhin's magazine that he had originated under the title Better Rural Schools Bulletin while employed in the Department of Public Instruction.

19. Fred L. Shaw, Course of Study for the Elementary Schools of South Dakota,

Pierre, S. D.: Fred Olander Co., 1922, pp. 152, 154; Willis E. Johnson and Frank L. Ransom, Community Civics, Mitchell, S. D.: Educator Supply Co., 1922.

20. Johnson and Ransom, Community Civics, pp. 63-80.

21. "County Supervision," South Dakota Educator, vol. 37, no. 5, Jan. 1924, pp. 27-28.

22. Telephone report, April 3, 1981, from Lawrence Hibpschman, South Dakota State Archivist, who searched the Guhin years in the Brown County superintendents' records on my request.

23. "Annie Shelland Williams," Who's Who Among Minnesota Women, p. 345.

24. "A Brief History of the Y. C. L.," p. 2.

25. Ibid.; E. C. Giffen, "South Dakota Young Citizens League," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 1, Sept.,1925, p. 13. S. B. Nissen, Editor of the South Dakota Education Association Journal, gave credit for recommending the state organization to Guhin; "The Young Citizens League," National Education Association Journal, vol. 19, 1930, p. 139. Giffen himself claimed the credit; YCL historical statements such as "A Brief History of the Y. C. L.," and his immediate selection as State Executive Secretary favor his claim. Guhin surely favored the idea of county and state organization.

26. "Score Card for Rural Schools," South Dakota Education Association Journal. vol. 1, Sept. 1925, p. 42; K. H. Cressman, "Report of Rural School Director," Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of South Dakota, July 1, 1924 to June 30, 1926, Pierre, S. D.: State Publishing Co., 1926, p. 9.

27. "Pledge, Constitution and By-Laws of South Dakota Young Citizens League (1925)," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 1, Sept. 1925, pp. 26-27.

28. Giffen, "South Dakota Young Citizens League," Sept. 1925, p. 13.

29. "Pledge, Constitution and By-Laws," pp. 26-27.

30. Giffen, "South Dakota Young Citizens League," Sept. 1925, p. 13.

31. E. C. Giffen, "South Dakota Young Citizens League," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 1, Jan. 1926, p. 240; C. G. St. John, "A Letter from the State Superintendent," p. 223 in the same issue, is an example of Department of Public Instruction support.

32. E. C. Giffen, "Young Citizens League," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 2, Oct. 1926, p. 87.

33. "A Brief History of the Y. C. L.," p. 2.

34. E. C. Giffen, "Young Citizens League," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 2, Sept. 1926, pp. 37-40; Nov. 192[illegible], p. 165; Dec. 1926, p.256.

35. "A Brief History of the Y. C. L.," p. 2.

36. "Young Citizens League, State Convention, Capitol Building, Pierre, April 25, 26," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 2, June 1927, pp. 616-617. The Code of Ethics is on p. 596 of the same issue.

37. "Shall the Y. C. L. Movement Go On?," editorial in the Mobridge Tribune, April 28, 1927; reprinted in South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 2, June 1927, p. 618.

38. "A Brief History of the Y. C. L.," p. 2.

39. Ibid.; Proceedings of the Senate, Special Session of the Twentieth Legislature of the State of South Dakota . . ., Pierre, S. D.: State Publishing Co., 1927, p. 9.

40. Proceedings of the Senate, Special Session, p. 30.

41. "Chapter 2, General Appropriation Bill," The Laws Passed at the Special Session of the Twentieth Legislature of the State of South Dakota, Pierre, S. D.: Hipple Printing Co., 1927, p. 11.

42. S. B. Nissen, "The Young Citizens' League of South Dakota," National Education Association Journal, vol. 16, 1927, p. 277.

43. "A Brief History of the Y. C. L.," p. 2; C. G. St. John, "Report of the Young Citizens' League," in Nineteenth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of South Dakota, July 1, 1926 to June 30, 1928, Pierre, S. D., 1928, p. 27. Interestingly, St. John stopped paying Giffen's salary in March, perhaps in retaliation for Giffen's winning the Republican Party endorsement over him in the race for Superintendent of Public Instruction that fall.

44. E. C. Giffen, "Young Citizens League," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 2, March 1927, p. 442.

45. "A Brief History of the Y. C. L.," pp. 2-3.

46. Nissen, "The Young Citizens League of South Dakota," p. 277.

47. S. B. Nissen, "The Young Citizens League," National Education Association Journal, vol. 19, 1930, p. 140; Nissen, "The Young Citizens' League of South Dakota," p. 278.

48. "Excerpts from the Annual Report, Young Citizens League, 1927," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 3, Sept. 1927, p. 45.

49. For example, in 1928-29 see E. C. Giffen, "Young Citizens League Official," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 4, Oct. 1928, pp. 97-98; D. C. Mills, "Young Citizens League Official," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 4, April 1929, p. 485.

50. E. C. Giffen, "Young Citizens League Official: For Character Education and Citizenship Training," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 3, Oct. 1927, pp. 104-105; Nov. 1927, pp. 171-172.

51. Nissen, "The Young Citizens League," pp. 139-140.

52. D. C. Mills, Annual Report of the Young Citizens League Project Work, 1929, Pierre, S.D.: Department of Public Instruction, [1929], p. 3.

53. E. C. Giffen, Young Citizens League," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 2, Jan. 1927, p. 32.

54. E. C. Giffen, "Young Citizens League Official: For Character Education and Citizenship Training," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 3, June 1928, p. 582; D. C. Mills, "Young Citizens League Official," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 4, March 1929, p. 418.

55. For example, see vol. 2, Dec. 1926, pp. 309-310.

56. D. C. Mills, "Young Citizens League Official," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 5, Sept. 1929, p. 37.

57. Nissen, "The Young Citizens League," p. 140. Copies of The Young Citizen in libraries are very few. The ones available from a decade later follow the pattern described in these sources.

58. Mills, Annual Report, 1929, pp. 1-2, 6.

59. Emma Meistrik, "Young Citizens League," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 10, 1935, p. 390.

60. E. C. Giffen, "Young Citizens League Official," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 4, Sept. 1928, p. 46; E. C. Giffen, "Young Citizens League Official: For Character Education and Citizenship Training," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 3, June 1928, p. 581.

61. D. C. Mills, "Young Citizens League Official," South Dakota Education Association Journal, vol. 4, Feb. 1929, p. 347.

62. "Report of the Young Citizens League," in Twentieth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of South Dakota, July 1, 1928 to June 30, 1930, Pierre, S.D., 1930, p. 25.

63. "young Citizens League Official," vol. 3, Sept. 1927, p. 42.